I claim:

1. A method for processing metadata of a media signal comprising:

embedding metadata steganographically in the media signal.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the metadata in the media signal is encrypted.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the metadata in the media signal is compressed.

4. The method of claim 3 wherein the media signal comprises a printed image and the compressed metadata includes voice data.

5. The method of claim 3 wherein the media signal comprises a video signal and the compressed metadata includes voice data .

6. The method of claim 1 wherein the metadata in the media signal includes a metadata digest.

7. The method of claim 6 wherein the metadata digest includes descriptors of external metadata about the media signal, where the external metadata is stored in a database external to the media signal.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein the descriptors provide an abbreviated version of the external metadata.

9. The method of claim 7 wherein the steganographically embedded metadata includes an index to the external metadata stored in the database.

10. The method of claim 7 including:

extracting the metadata from the media signal; and

displaying descriptors of the external metadata.

11. The method of claim 10 including:

displaying a link to the external metadata;

in response to selection of the link, fetching the external metadata associated with the link.

12. The method of claim 1 wherein the metadata in the media signal includes a content signature of the media signal.

13. The method of claim 12 wherein the content signature comprises a hash of the media signal, and computing the hash includes low pass filtering the media signal.

14. The method of claim 12 wherein the content signature comprises a hash of the media signal, and computing the hash includes computing salient features of the media signal.

15. The method of claim 1 wherein the metadata in the media signal includes a metadata signature.

16. The method of claim 15 wherein the metadata signature comprises a hash of external metadata relating to the media signal.

17. The method of claim 16 wherein the external metadata is stored in a file header of the media signal.

18. The method of claim 16 wherein the external metadata is stored in an external database referenced by metadata embedded in the media signal.

19. The method of claim 1 wherein the metadata in the media signal includes a time stamp.

20. The method of claim 19 including:

marking an event of processing the media signal with the time stamp.

21. The method of claim 20 wherein the event comprises editing of the media signal.

22. The method of claim 20 wherein the event comprises encoding a digital watermark into the media signal.

23. The method of claim 20 wherein the event comprises transfer of the media signal from device to another.

24. The method of claim 1 wherein the metadata in the media signal includes a location stamp.

25. The method of claim 24 including:

marking an event of processing the media signal with the location stamp.

26. The method of claim 25 wherein the event comprises editing of the media signal.

27. The method of claim 25 wherein the event comprises encoding of a digital watermark into the media signal.

28. The method of claim 25 wherein the event comprises transfer of the media signal from one device to another.

29. The method of claim 1 including:

storing external metadata of the media signal externally to the media signal;

wherein the metadata in the media signal and the external metadata stored externally are related in a manner in which validity of the metadata can be evaluated by comparison.

30. The method of claim 29 wherein the metadata embedded in the media signal includes a hash of the external metadata; and authentication of the external metadata includes:

computing a hash of the external metadata; and

comparing the hash of the external metadata with the hash extracted from the metadata embedded into the media signal.